

LEWIS COREY (LOUIS C. FRAINA), 1892-1953: A BIBLIOGRAPHY WITH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

By ESTHER COREY

Editor's Note:

"The man who began as Louis C. Fraina and ended as Lewis Corey, provided the complete symbol of the American radical in the first half of the 20th century," Theodore Draper has remarked in his *Roots of American Communism*. It is a remarkable story, the more so when one considers that Corey was one of those rare persons, the self-educated individual who is able to master an entire literature and to leave his own stamp upon it.

The career of Lewis Corey can be marked in three phases:

As Louis C. Fraina he was, undoubtedly, the outstanding intellectual figure and the most indefatigable publicist of the emerging Communist movement in the United States. He was the keynote chairman of the founding convention of the Communist Party, became its international secretary and editor of its publication. Within a few years, however, he abruptly left the movement and went into quiet obscurity.

As Lewis Corey, the author, in 1934, of the *Decline of American Capitalism*, he emerged as one of the most influential Marxist writers of the Depression years. That book, together with John Strachey's *The Coming Struggle for Power*, shaped the thinking of a new generation that swept into the radical movement in the 1930s.

The third phase was one of re-evaluation of Marxism and of fresh starts. Corey's *The Unfinished Task*, published in 1942, was one of the outstanding "revisionist" books on Marxism since the first debates forty years before. More importantly, it initiated a new discussion on the "mixed economy" as a means of providing social direction of the economy, yet of avoiding the dangers of bureaucratization and statism which had befouled the original Socialist dream.

As the accompanying bibliography shows, Corey was a prodigious worker, and his writings provide a clear mirror which reflects the course of radicalism in the first half of the century. Corey had planned an autobiography but, though he wrote an outline, he was never able to start work on it. The final irony of his life was that at the point when

he had begun to write a testament of political faith in America, he was served with a deportation order under the McCarran Act, and died while fighting that injustice.

His wife, Esther Corey, has assembled from his notes some poignant details of his life and intellectual development, as well as a complete bibliography of his writings. We think that this document will be useful to students of social history in America.—D. B.

Introduction

I met Louis Fraina in Moscow in the Fall of 1920. I was then working for the Comintern; he was a delegate to the Second Congress. We lived in the same hotel, the Delovoy Dvor, and got acquainted through an interpreter. Neither of us spoke the other's language, but with the help of some German, Italian and French we created a polyglot of our own.

One morning Louis Fraina was walking me to the office along the Moscow River, when he asked me in German, "*Wollen Sie meine Frau bekommen?*" ("Do you want to receive my wife?"). I burst out laughing, and our friendship was interrupted for a while. Shortly afterward, however we wound up in Moscow's "Marriage and Divorce Buro" and signed our names. I proceeded on my way to the office, and Fraina went to share the news with his friend Michael Borodin (later editor of the *Moscow News*), who responded with the remark, "You fool." Both came to my office: Fraina to introduce his newly acquired wife; Borodin to look me over. He blessed us by saying to Fraina, "She will be a rock of Gibraltar."

Thirty-three years later, in the notes for an autobiography, Corey described the wedding party his friends gave us at the house of Leo Karakhan, then head of the *Narkomindel* (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs):

"The wedding party was attended by English-speaking friends, each of whom brought something to eat or drink. Ellen Wilkinson (the British Laborite) brought a sausage she had brought from England, others a bit of cheese, bread, Borodin a bottle of wine, etc. I gave my wife a chamois bag as a gift. Borodin and I walked for six hours visiting the Moscow shops, all empty and deserted, to find the bag."

A few weeks later Fraina returned to Berlin, leaving me in Moscow. "In Berlin," he wrote in the same notes, "I concluded that it was a mistake to leave my wife in Moscow to come later to the U.S.A., so I wrote to Lenin to ask him to help her get permission to leave, to join me, which he did."

For the next thirty-three years Lewis Corey studied, wrote, taught, and participated in a number of movements; he was constantly "thinking and re-thinking." And because his ideas are embedded in his writings, to give a clear picture of his development, I decided to compile this bibliography.

I—The Early Years

The story of Lewis Corey's early life as Louis Fraina has been told by himself.

"I was born in Galdo, Italy, in 1892, came to the U.S.A. three years later with my mother (father, a republican exile, came a year earlier). Lived and brought up in the slums of New York, on the Bowery, Mulberry Street and Christie Street; when six-years-old sold newspapers on the Bowery around Chatham Square; later, after school hours, worked for a time in a tobacco factory helping my mother, and later as a bootblack; sent to parochial school, I revolted, played hookey for six months, until my mother agreed to send me to public school, where I made friends with several of the teachers and never played hookey again; I won medals for elocution and composition, and was valedictorian of my graduation class. A physical weakling, I tried to play games, but was a failure, so absorbed myself in reading. I graduated in 1908, four months before my 14th birthday, but my father died five weeks after my graduation and I had to go to work, never went to High School or College. . . ."¹

In 1945 Lewis Corey delivered a talk at Antioch College in which he looked back at his own origins and development.

"I was brought up in the slums of New York City . . . Poverty, like life in general, affects different people in different ways. The great majority of slum children grow up into decent human beings, many of them become outstanding citizens, but one or two of the boys I knew landed in reform school where they got education that made them

¹ Lewis Corey, "One Rebel's Years: An Autobiography of a Generation," Notes for an Autobiography, 1953.

hardened criminals. I escaped—largely, I imagine, because I spent much more time on books than on rowdy mischief. . . . At twelve I began to read books of human moral affirmation and of social protest.

"When my father died, my mother, true to her old peasant tradition, said to me as the older son (I was thirteen), 'You are now the man of the house.'

"I never went to high school or college . . . at fourteen I had to go to work. . . . I kept on reading widely. . . .

"At sixteen I began to write for the *Truth Seeker*, an agnostic publication. Arthur Brisbane read one of the articles, and gave me a job as cub reporter on *The Journal*. . . .

"I joined the Socialist Party . . . but resigned after six months to join the party of Daniel DeLeon, the Socialist Labor Party, became first an organizer and then a member of the editorial staff of the *Daily People*, for which I covered the Lawrence Textile strike of 1913. I became an I.W.W. member for six months.

"I became active in the labor movement and in the socialist movement. . . . I read Marx and in time became a thorough Marxist; but Marx did not give me my socialism; he gave me its theory and justification. It was the fact that I read Marx (most Marxists never do) that made it possible for me, I think, to turn away from Marxism without abandoning the aspirations and the struggle for a better world. . . .

"It is hard to recapture the movement of socialism in the early 1900s. . . . It was animated by a passionate humanitarianism. . . .

"I had already cast off my religion—much too easily, I now suspect. I felt that the moral human values of early Christianity were embodied in Socialism. . . . The liberation of the workers as a class was merely a prelude to the liberation of all men as human beings.

"It all flamed up in an enthusiastic acceptance of the Communist Revolution of 1917-19. . . .²

"I resigned from the Socialist Labor Party early in 1914. In the fall of that year I became editor of the *New Review*, a theoretical Socialist monthly on whose editorial board were Walter Lippmann, William English Walling, J. G. Phelps Stokes, Ernest Poole, Charles Steinmetz, Robert Lewis, Max Eastman and Floyd Dell.³

² Lewis Corey, "A Rediscovery of Democracy," autobiographical talk at Antioch College, College, 1945

³ Corey, "One Rebel's Years. . . ."

"For the *New Review* of July 15, 1915, I wrote an article which was the first American appreciation of Robert Frost and his poetry, saying: 'His poems (*Northward Bound*) deal with men and women of a phase of American life—rural New England—which is fast disappearing, and he seems to have caught the fleeting spirit of its harsh living . . . with gleams of sympathy all the more beautiful because of their rarity. . . .'

"I was pro-Ally at the outbreak of World War I, and was shocked at the collapse of the Socialist International . . . , [at] the brutalizing effect of the war, what it did to human sensibility and values. . . .

"The *New Review* suspended publication early in 1916, and several months later I became editor of the *Modern Dance Magazine*. . . .

"I rejoined the Socialist Party in 1917 and became a leader of its anti-war faction. Although not a pacifist, I became active in the conscientious objector movement because of its anti-war character. I was arrested with Ralph Cheyney, and we were sentenced to thirty days which were served in 1919. . . ."⁴

At his trial Fraina argued against government recognition of religious conscientious objectors only. In his testimony he said:

"Since when must a man necessarily belong to a church, belong to a creed, before he can have a conscience? I had acquired my objection by experience, action, and I have felt it flow into my conscience, my life. . . ." (*Fraina et al. v. U.S. Fed. 28, 2nd Circ. 1918*).

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"The Future of Socialism," Jan. 1915.

⁴ *Ibid*

- "The Menace of American Militarism," March 1915.
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 "The Class and the Nation," Jan. 15, 1916.
 (Note: Beginning with January 1, 1916, the journal's "Current Affairs" column is frequently signed by "F" or "L.C.F.").

Book Reviews

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 April 1914 (*A History of Socialism*, by Thomas Cirkup and *Socialism and Democracy in Europe*, by Samuel P. Orth)
 May 15, 1915 (review of five books on Treitschke and of Treitschke's writings)
 June 15, 1915 (*Tales of Two Countries*, by Maxim Gorky)
 July 15, 1915 (Reviews of new collections of poems by Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, James Oppenheim and Vachel Lindsay)
 Aug. 1, 1915 (*France in Danger*, by Paul Vergnet)
 Sept. 15, 1915 (*The Re-making of China*, by Adelph S. Waley)
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II—Becoming a Communist

In the autobiographical address at Antioch College Corey has told of his having become a Communist.

"Early in 1917 I became editor of a left-wing paper, *The New International*, in which, six months before the Bolshevik Revolution, I supported Lenin and his policies.

"Why did I become a Communist in 1917? I had read Marx and had learned from him the idea of a revolution which arises out of the democratic revolution, which Communism transforms into a proletarian revolution against capitalism. I accepted this idea and saw it come alive

in Russian Bolshevism. . . . Neither I nor most of my comrades of the time were enemies of democracy; the mistake we made was in taking democracy for granted, not realizing that the institutional proposals of Bolshevik Communism must necessarily end in [the] destruction of democracy.”¹

In 1953, Fraina wrote a comprehensive outline for an autobiography to be entitled, *One Rebel's Years: An Autobiography of a Generation*. Though the book itself was never completed, he recalled:

“In the winter of 1917-18 a group of Russians (Leon Trotsky, Nikolai Bukharin and Alexandra Kollontai) together with American left-wingers (Boudin, Lore and myself) were planning a Marxist Left-Wing bi-monthly *The Class Struggle*. Then came the March revolution in Russia; the Russians left and the new magazine appeared without them.”

The Class Struggle was edited by Boudin, Lore and Fraina.

“In *The Class Struggle* Boudin opposed the Bolsheviks, and Lore and I compelled him to resign, and we added Eugene Debs to the editorial board.

“In the spring of 1918 I was called to Boston to work for the Socialist Party local there. In November I started a new paper, *The Revolutionary Age*, which became the national organ of the Left Wing, and in which I published the Manifesto of the Communist International, calling for a new revolutionary regrouping of socialist forces. In March 1918 I issued a call in the name of the local Boston and the local Cleveland [clubs] of the Socialist Party for a conference to organize a National Left Wing.

“The Conference met and I was the keynote chairman and drew up the Manifesto. There was a split in the Left Wing; two conventions were held in September 1919 with two Communist Parties organized—the Communist Party to which I belonged, and the John Reed-Benjamin Gitlow Communist Labor Party. I was the keynote chairman at the Communist Party Convention, and drew up its Manifesto and declaration of principles. I was elected a member of the central committee, national editor and international secretary. Three months later I was appointed to represent the Party at a congress in Moscow. . . .

“Just before my departure from New York . . . I was accused of being an agent of the Department of Justice. A “trial” was held and my

¹ *Ibid.*

party exonerated me. I left for Russia where the Comintern appointed a committee to look into the charges. I was again fully exonerated. . . .

"In my last interview with Lenin, he asked me about the accusations and after he read the Comintern resolution, Lenin suggested that the man making the 'spy' charge be called upon to retract the accusations in writing. This was added to the resolution and published in the American press: 'The Executive Committee of the Communist International insists that Nuorteva must retract publicly, in the press, all the accusations made by him against Comrade Fraina.'"

Bibliography: 1917-1920

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III—I Discover America

Soon after the Comintern dismissed these accusations Fraina found that in practice Communism did not exemplify the ideals which had

led him to embrace it as a political philosophy. In his statement to the FBI, he asserted:

"In the fall of 1922 I decided to resign from the Communist Party. . . . Why did I resign? Well, it is a complicated thing. . . . It is hard to pin down a process of thinking like that. . . . I was becoming dissatisfied with factionalism . . . it was getting worse and worse. I had already begun to see the beginnings . . . I may not have been wholly aware at that time. There is an unconscious process that goes on. At the Congress, for example, what the Russians wanted was what was voted. On the question of the Labor Party, Lenin and the Russians were of the opinion that a Labor Party should be formed—underground first . . . I was opposed to that; it went through. . . . I was becoming conscious, more conscious today than then, of the way things were congealing, with the Russians giving all the orders, that freedom of thinking on our part was going to disappear . . . , that the thing was becoming a rigid organization in which you had either to say yes, or else. . . . I did not break away from orthodox Marxism and theoretical Communism until later. . . ." ⁶

In his outline for an autobiography Fraina wrote:

"Early in 1923 I returned to New York with my wife whom I had married in Moscow, and our 7-month-old daughter, Olga (born in Mexico City). . . .

"From 1923 to 1929 I discovered America in the sense of achieving a growing understanding of the American way of life as determined by the freedoms of a liberal democracy—a realistic understanding which was not impaired or controverted by the indignation justly aroused by the miscarriages of justice in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. My wife helped me in this process, as a Russian who looked at America as it was, not through ideological spectacles. . . . In the years 1923-29 I was very close to my daughter, living a childhood I had never known.

"For several years I did no writing, being absorbed in readjustment and in finding jobs. . . . I worked as a clerk in an East Side store, a copy-holder, and then as a proofreader for Street and Smith publications, and later, as a night substitute proofreader for *The New York Times*." ⁷

One night while he was working at the *Times*, Corey came home

⁶ "F.B.I. Investigation," Yellow Springs, 1949-50, Stenographic Report, 150 pp.

⁷ Corey, "One Rebel's Years. . . ."

with the news of Lenin's death. We reminisced sadly of Lenin's philosophical discussion with Fraina in 1920 in the midst of the Civil War; of Lenin's concern with our personal lives.

In 1926 he returned to writing. It was stimulated by a book by Thomas Nixon Carver. Corey wrote to me:

"I came across a book by Professor Thomas Nixon Carver, *The Present Economic Revolution in the United States*. It tried to show that the ownership of stocks in the great corporations was becoming so widespread that the workers would soon own and control American industry. I collected data and wrote an article, 'How is Ownership Distributed?,' trying to refute Carver."⁸

The article was the first which was signed 'Lewis Corey' (thus keeping the first two initials of his name), and this was published in the *New Republic* in the issue of May 2, 1926.

"It is clear," he wrote, "that the concentration of income and of corporate ownership is staggering and undeniable.

"The conclusions are inescapable:

"First, the conception of a developing equalization of income and democratization of corporate ownership is not proved by the available statistical evidence; on the contrary, the evidence is against the conception.

"Second, on the basis of the 1925-26 statistics, the recovery in the concentration of income and corporate ownership since 1921 has been complete.

"Third, non-labor and non-farmer elements are increasing their share of the national income at the expense of the basic producing classes, whose share has declined considerably."

Six months before the stock market crash of 1929, Corey began one article with the words: "The stock market situation is recognized as dangerous."⁹

Frank H. Knight, then at the University of Iowa, wrote to "Lewis Corey," care of the *New Republic* (May 12, 1927): "I like so much your article in the current issue of the *New Republic*, and I write to ask if you will tell me who you are. It is not mere curiosity." He stated he would like to be able to look up "other writings which you have

⁸ Corey Correspondence (Columbia University Library Special Collections).

⁹ Theodore Draper, *Roots of American Communism* (New York, Viking Press, 1957)

probably published, and to watch for more in the future." At the bottom of Knight's letter was Corey's handwritten note:

"Answered—I wrote that I was afraid he would be disappointed as to who I am. A wage-earner interested in economics and writing occasionally."¹⁰

Economic, rather than political, philosophy pervaded Corey's writing at this time. In his own *Annotated Bibliography* Corey referred to these articles as follows:

"These articles were not pro-Communist. None of them defended any policies of the Communist Party or the Communist International. They were primarily statistical studies of economic phenomena. Some of them had a Marxist slant, but, at the same time, they expressed my process of re-thinking my old ideas and moving toward new ideas."

He continued to write in the field of economics:

"In 1929 I got a fellowship at the Institute of Economics at the Brookings Institution and worked there 1929-1930; also, a contract to write a book, *The House of Morgan*, published in 1931. In this same year I became an associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, under Alvin Johnson, a position I held until its completion in 1934."¹¹

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(In 1926 Louis C. Fraina assumed the permanent pen-name of Lewis Corey)

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"Dividends are Insured, Why Not Wages?" *Nation*, Nov. 26, 1930.

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¹⁰ Correspondence.

¹¹ Corey, "One Rebel's Years. . . ."

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IV—The 1930s

While writing *The House of Morgan*, Corey continued working three days a week as a proofreader. By this time it had become known that Corey and Fraina were the same person. Whenever he got a new job, the Communists were sure to inform the employer of this fact. In 1931, he obtained work as an assistant editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Corey used to call the *Encyclopedia* his university—"It filled in all my gaps." Writing and doing research and making a living at it was something he had not known before. Out of the *Encyclopedia* came, as a by-product, his most ambitious project, *The Decline of American Capitalism*. In the outline for his autobiography Corey wrote:

"My only contacts with the Communist Party after my return to the U.S. were as follows: (1) in 1932, along with a number of others, including Sidney Hook and Edmund Wilson, I signed a manifesto issued by the League of Professional Groups for the election of Foster and Ford, Communist Party candidates for President and Vice-President, (2) around 1935 I edited a 'middle-class' issue of the *New Masses*."¹²

Corey resigned from the League when he realized that there was an underground Communist cell undermining every proposal he made. The League dissolved shortly afterwards.

The Decline of American Capitalism came out two years later. A large order was placed by the Party's literature department. The Workers' Bookshop on 13th St. in New York City gave it a full window display; the Communist Press treated it respectfully. Shortly afterwards the order was cancelled, the window display removed, and two consecutive "theoretical" critical reviews of the book were published in *The Communist* (Oct. and Nov. 1934). These reviews were printed in a sixty-four page pamphlet, *Leninism, the Only Marxism of Today*. One of the criticisms was that Stalin was never mentioned; another, that the Communist Party was not capitalized. Since the sale of the book continued, each buyer in the Workers' Bookshop was given the

¹² Correspondence

pamphlet free as an antidote. The book had a good general sale and for a while it was on the best seller list. A year later Corey's *Crisis of the Middle Class* was favorably reviewed in the *New Masses* (Dec. 17, 1935), and for a while it was offered free with subscriptions.

Whether it was the Popular Front or the success of Corey's books, the Communists began to woo him. When he was asked to edit a "middle-class" issue of the *New Masses*, he accepted on condition that he would be the sole editor of the issue and that he choose his own contributors. It was agreed. However, the other editors distorted some of the articles, and Corey was listed a "chairman of the editorial committee which prepared the issue" (*New Masses*, April 17, 1936). At about that time overtures were made to induce him to rejoin the Party. But he refused and drifted further and further away.

In the F.B.I. Stenographic Report made in 1949-50 Corey described his experiences at this time:

"The first big jolt, the final jolt that made me see that even this general faith and hope that Soviet Communism would still move in the right direction had to be abandoned—came with the purges of 1936, 1937."¹³

From his lecture tour, during the purges, he wrote to me:

"I have been reading the western morning papers, and their reports of the trials are very brief. Apparently Bukharin spoke up, but in a peculiar manner. It seems he ended up with 'Long Live Stalin!' What the hell does it all mean? For one thing it means that Lenin overdid the idea of party discipline and party loyalty. I think that discipline and loyalty have become so much a part of these men that they are loyal to the party even when it has turned against their ideas. *A re-evaluation of all values is necessary.*"¹⁴

Shortly after the *New Masses* experience, a group of pro-Communist Harvard intellectuals asked him to join the editorial board of a new Marxist magazine, *The American Marxist Review*, which later became *Science and Society*. Instead, Corey proposed a non-party Marxist journal. Subsequent correspondence shows that the Harvard group first proposed a merger of the two magazines, then offered Corey an editorship in the field of economics. He said in a letter:

"In opposition to the Party's *Science and Society*, I planned with

¹³ "F.B.I. Investigation."

¹⁴ Correspondence.

Sidney Hook, Bertram D. Wolfe, and Louis M. Hacker, a non-communist Marxist quarterly. Corliss Lamont worked with us and paid the publication costs.

"At that time the purges had begun. All editors except Lamont condemned the purges. Lamont withdrew his support and joined the editorial board of *Science and Society*, and the quarterly suspended publication."¹⁵

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V—Marxism Reconsidered

After six months in Washington as an economist for the WPA, Corey became educational director of Local 22 of the International Ladies Garment Workers (1937-39).

In 1939, as war approached, he took a position for non-intervention, but he soon resigned from the "Keep America Out of War" Com-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

mittee. Instead, in 1940 he was instrumental, together with Murray Gross, Reinhold Niebuhr and others, in founding the anti-Communist "Union for Democratic Action" (later "Americans for Democratic Action"). For the UDA Corey wrote *A Program for Americans* (1941), a twelve-page pamphlet in which he appealed for a British victory over Germany.

The Russian purges had forced Corey to question the fundamental principles of communism, a process which was not completed until the German-Soviet pact of 1939. The pact destroyed his belief in the very basis of Marxism itself.¹⁶ In his three articles in the *Nation*, "Marxism Reconsidered," early in 1940, he made a complete break.

"The bitter admission must be made that all variants of Marxism, 'revolutionary' and 'reformist,' meeting the pragmatic test of history, have revealed fatal shortcomings. . . .

"But if admission of failure has been made, then a tremendous job of re-evaluation is necessary. The job should be done in all humility—we have been wrong and may be wrong again, but it must be done fearlessly and vigorously. . . .

"All his [Marx's] creative originality was congealed into a system which had a 'Marxist' explanation for everything . . . , which was unjust to Marx himself because the system denied his emphasis on the historical relativity of ideas. . . .

"The Marxist tactics came to life only in Russia where the bourgeois democratic revolution gave Lenin the chance to apply them. . . ."

Corey drew the conclusion:

"The socialist system of collective ownership is compatible with totalitarianism . . . there is a totalitarian potential in the socialist economic system."

He discussed ways of achieving and maintaining a more democratic economic order without the sacrifice of political democracy.

"The final detailed repudiation which was begun in the *Nation* articles is in the book which I published in the spring of 1942, *The Unfinished Task* . . . in which I attempt to formulate a new social philosophy and program."

He enlarged on this in *The Unfinished Task*:

"This is my first book since 1935. Its analyses and conclusions represent five years' reconsideration of the problems of social change as

¹⁶ Draper, *op. cit.*

they have been affected by the totalitarian challenge to democratic progress. The ideas took shape slowly in lectures and in articles. . . . Upon the men of our generation falls the duty to unlearn, relearn and learn anew. The beginning of wisdom today is the admission of mistakes. . . . All doctrinaire absolutes imprison life, freedom and action in their restricting fetters. . . . Democracy came into the world as a revolutionary liberating economic (and political) force; we must renew the force."

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VI—The Years at Antioch College and After

After Corey spoke at a World War Reconstruction Conference held at Antioch College, he was invited to temporarily replace a professor of economics who had been drafted. He hesitated at first, but I was most anxious to see him teach and live a relaxed life for a while in a college community. He resigned from his job as research director of the UDA and accepted the offer. I remained in New York.

His letters sounded enthusiastic from the beginning:

"The students are interesting [he wrote, and later stated] I am now having an experience I never had before, of living with the spring in the country—here the spring is everywhere—you cannot escape it. Grass and shrubs and trees and flowers—they are all bursting into life. . . . Yes, it is a new experience. It will be much nicer when you and I live with the spring together."

"My proposal for the formation of a Student Union for Democratic Reconstruction [he wrote later] has been accepted. Tonight I speak at the War Relief dinner: In Defense of Britain. [In May 1942, he stated] I have plunged into a lot of work—classes, exams and a two-day Conference on Eastern and Central Europe. . . . The Conference was very interesting, especially the Poles and Yugoslavs. Out of it came the idea of an Institute of Culture to teach the languages and histories of Slavic and other peoples to train workers for post-war reconstruction."

A permanent appointment was slow in coming, and Corey was getting impatient and lonely:

"I am beginning to wonder whether it is all worth anything: whether it would not be better to forget the whole business, go back to proof-reading and, for the few years of our lives live normally and simply without any excitement. After all, the happiest years of my life were Marble Hill with you and Olga."

Finally, the appointment was made. Corey taught at Antioch from 1942 to June 1951 (perhaps the country's only economics professor who had never been to high school). When he had been at Antioch only three weeks, the President called him in and told him that the school had been receiving anonymous letters about his Communist past.

This was just the beginning. Individuals and organizations on the extreme right and the extreme left alike distributed leaflets and wrote

articles castigating him. During the first summer he taught at Antioch, the *Chicago Tribune* published a story headed "Red Teaching at Antioch." Other attacks were made by J. B. Matthews and the Dies Committee (in 1942), Walter Steele of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the League of Justice of Cleveland (in 1946) and Gerald L. K. Smith (in 1947).

One of the extreme right organizations distributed a leaflet throughout the State of Ohio accusing the Antioch trustees of having given him "unlimited opportunities to implant Communist doctrine in the minds of innocent students who are not informed that Corey is a leading Communist." These attacks were annoying enough, but even more troublesome was the conspiratorial campaign aimed against him by the Communist Party. There was no "problem of Communism" as such at the college, only misunderstanding, lack of knowledge and misinterpretation of "academic freedom," which allowed the Communists to destroy freedom as they misused it. One student, after dropping out of the Young Communist League, voluntarily told Corey that a representative of the Ohio State Communist Party had been sent to Antioch to instruct the students of the Young Communist League to "get rid of Corey," and sent a written statement to this effect.

When his article, "Second Front, Military and Political,"—calling attention to the dangers of Communist imperialism—appeared in the *Antioch Review*, two lieutenants and a captain of the Wright Field Movie Unit warned the editor of the *Antioch Review* against publishing any more of Corey's articles.¹⁷

Emerging as one of the most vigorous leaders of the anti-Communist liberal movement, Corey found the Communist ideological attacks upon him degenerating into personal abuse, and from there to plain attempts at blackmail.¹⁸ In spite of it all, Corey's classes were popular, his pedagogical methods unconventional and exciting. He himself thoroughly enjoyed the experience of teaching.

"I taught at Antioch as a professor of political economy from 1942 to June 1951 [he wrote]. I was active in campus activities and taught these courses: 1) American Civilization, 2) Principles of Economics, 3) Labor Relations, 4) World Reconstruction 1944-1946, 5) Technology and Civilization, 6) Business and Government, and 7) Social

¹⁷ Correspondence.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Movements Since the Renaissance. . . . I was also an editor of the *Antioch Review* and a frequent contributor to its pages."¹⁹

One of his former students wrote of Corey's method of teaching in the *Antioch Alumni Bulletin*:

"A man who raises questions in a student's mind has a priceless gift as a teacher. This was one of Corey's major offerings to Antioch. The man who tries to answer these questions is bound to be controversial. Corey was undoubtedly controversial. Out of the controversy came debate. Out of the answers came more questions. Out of the entire process students became alive to the problems of this age and generation, and their participation was less vicarious and more real because of Corey's intercession. And he forced those whose answers differed from his own to look into their own knowledge and experience and be sure that they knew what they were talking about."²⁰

Corey taught, lectured, and was active on and off campus.

He suffered his first cerebral hemorrhage in 1943. The doctors disagreed about his need to live a different type of life. But there was really no choice: after recovering, he went on as usual.

In July 1944 the secretary of the Michigan Commonwealth Federation sent Corey the first draft of the Federation's Declaration of Principles, asking what he thought of it. Corey drew up a ten-point program for the organization. Out of this came the effort of the National Education Committee to form a new party which might regroup all the left-liberal forces in the country. In 1945 and 1946 he spent such time as could be spared from his duties at Antioch organizing and advancing the idea for a new party based on the program he had outlined for the Federation, traveling a good deal at his own expense.²¹ The party was still-born, but his attempt to organize it helped him to clarify his ideas.

The Fells Institute psychiatrist once invited him to spend an evening playing cards. Corey declined—he did not like to play cards. "What do you do for recreation, Lewis?" he asked. Without hesitation Corey said, "Listen to records and to my wife." He loved books and music. He was an infrequent visitor to museums, but acquired a large collection of art books and records with which he spent many evenings. Strauss

¹⁹ Corey, "One Rebel's Years. . . ."

²⁰ Correspondence

²¹ *Ibid.*

and Verdi were his favorite composers, the first representing joy of life, the second humanity. "I hope to write an article on the humanist Verdi and the totalitarian Wagner in their struggle for the soul of man," he once wrote.²²

After the publication of his article, "Marxism Reconsidered," and his book, *The Unfinished Task*, Corey continued to develop his ideas in lectures and articles, and became a vigorous champion of democracy and individualism.

"As an old Marxist I am compelled, in the interest of the ideals for whose realization I worked, to conclude that Marxism is dead as a progressive social movement."²³

In an article in *Commentary*, "Democracy Without Statism," he wrote:

"Many radicals, especially the communists, including 'left liberals,' accept the identification of individualism as exclusively 'capitalist economic individualism,' [and] they want to replace it with an 'economic collectivism' that crushes liberty and individual rights as it uproots capitalism. . . . Communism also, like fascism, destroys liberty and degrades the individual. . . . The evidence grows, it is now conclusive that nationalization and planning and the totalitarian state support one another . . . Absolute state power is the enemy of free moral men."

In the summer of 1948 he taught at the Labor Institute of the University of Wisconsin. As a result of the favorable reaction of the Butchers' Union students, the head of the union, Pat Gorman, suggested that he write the union's history. Corey accepted, but the book which he wrote at Antioch told more than the story of the Union. It was descriptively entitled, *Meat and Man: a Study of Monopoly, Unionism and Food Policy*, and published by Viking Press in 1950. Ten years later a French edition was brought out in Paris. He also wrote articles on the food of tomorrow as well as food as a liberating force in the future of the world. In June 1951 he left Antioch to become educational director of the Amalgamated Butcher Workmen, A.F. of L. in Chicago. It is hard to tell what the real reason was for the change. At that time a controversy over group dynamics split the campus in two and Corey, in disagreement with the new Antioch president, was deeply involved in it. Perhaps this was the reason; perhaps he wanted

²² *Ibid*

²³ Corey, "A Rediscovery. . . ."

more participation in world affairs as a representative of a strong union; or perhaps the excitement that came from teaching had passed and his own clarification of ideas had been completed. For several years, his letters to me, when he was on lecture tours or at summer institutes away from Antioch, seemed to reflect a longing for new horizons. He wrote:

"Frankly, I've had more intellectual discussion and stimulus here during one week than I get at Antioch in a whole year; [or] It's swell to get away from Yellow Springs, it's interesting and keeps me young."

Educational work at the Union, however, was most unsatisfactory. It was routine and required neither his experience or knowledge. Then came a shattering blow. On December 21, 1950, he was served with a deportation warrant by the Department of Justice; charged—under the McCarran Act—with being in the country illegally, and with having been a Communist!

Lewis Corey had come to the United States from Italy when he was three years old. Neither his father nor his mother became citizens. He had applied for his first papers in 1916, but because he had been arrested as a conscientious objector in 1917 he had been advised that he would be barred from citizenship. Corey left the U.S. in 1920, to attend the second congress of the Communist International, and returned to the United States in 1923, after he had dropped out of the Comintern and the American Communist Party.

In 1950, shortly after I and my daughter had received our citizenship papers, Corey applied for a Certificate of Lawful Entry, and was told by officials in Washington that such a certificate would be granted. When the McCarran Act was passed that year, the processing of his application was halted. Instead, on Christmas Eve 1952 he was served with a deportation order.

Corey continued to suffer blows. In January 1953 he was discharged by Patrick Gorman, the head of the Meatcutters' Union, because the deportation order which, as the hearings opened, had now become public "embarrassed" him and the union.

Corey and the family moved to New York where, despite a mild heart attack, he spent endless hours on the tedious details necessary in preparation for the hearings. He travelled frequently to Washington for consultations with his lawyer, who had been engaged by a group of friends. During that time, he sought to continue his book

on Fanny Wright and to sketch out two books, one an autobiography, the other an outline on his political faith, *Towards an Understanding of America*.

On the evening of September 15, 1953, while he was working at his desk, he suffered a second cerebral hemorrhage and lapsed into a coma. The next day he died. Two days after his death, he received acceptance from a publisher of his projected work, *Toward an Understanding of America*. He also received from the Department of Justice his Certificate of Lawful Entry.

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VII—In Retrospect

In his outline for an autobiography Corey wrote of what his experience at Antioch had meant to him:

"The major by-product of my years at Antioch was an extensive study of ideas in which my process of re-thinking was completed . . . working out a revaluation of my life, experiences and philosophy, and shaping the elements of a new philosophy of humanism which, I believe, is relevant to the world of today and tomorrow."²⁴

In 1945, before the Antioch student body and faculty Corey gave a talk on "Rediscovery of Liberal Democracy:"

"I dropped out of the Communist Party in 1922. But it took me many years until I was able to settle my complete scores with Communism. I remained a Marxist; I remained under the influences of Russia. I was trying to find how Communism could still move in the liberal democratic direction.

"Economic vested interests are not the greatest barrier to human progress. . . . Vested interests in ideas are even a greater barrier. . . . When one believed in an idea a lifetime, the struggle it takes to reject or change the ideas, is simply terrific. . . . Out of this struggle has come my philosophy of life which is rock-ribbed in an acceptance of liberal democracy. . . .

"I still believe that the economic shortcomings of capitalism call for new economic institutions and new economic policies. . . . But now I believe just as firmly that any economic changes must be made within the framework of the procedures and values of liberal democracy . . . , that we must separate liberal democracy from the economics of capitalism. . . . I also believe that Marxism is unable to do the job of democratic social change. . . . There is much in Marxism that is usable for this purpose, but orthodox systematic Marxism must be abandoned. Its fatal flaw is the misunderstanding of liberal democracy and of values. . . ."

While still at Antioch, Corey worked on a number of projects. He amassed material for a biography of Frances Wright, the nineteenth-century feminist.

"It is not only a fascinating subject in itself," he wrote to a friend, "but it gives me a change to evaluate the 19th century, its liberalism, democracy, and romanticism." He assembled manuscripts, photostats and facts through research in Scotland, Paris, New York and Tennessee. The first draft was partially completed.²⁵ Among other manuscripts

²⁴ Corey, "One Rebel's Years. . . ."

²⁵ Correspondence.

are first drafts for textbooks "Everyman's Economics," "Labor Relations and Society," "What Marx Really Meant—an Analytical Anthology," plus many articles—all awaiting the day when he could peacefully work on them.

Daniel Bell wrote to Corey's daughter after her father's death: "I had, like many others, an intellectual debt to him. But I learned more from the arguments and questions, as one does, than from books. He wasn't the most serene of men. The fact that my visual recollections are primarily of his head thrust out, cocked to a side, eyes squinting, impatient to talk and arguing back with an emotional force, all make it difficult to imagine him gone. . . . He is a man who, fortunately for all of us, leaves a strong visual memory, a stronger one than many of those who sought to crush him and denigrate him at some time or another. And that is not only a consolation but also an inspiration."²⁶

At this time there was considerable discussion as to whether a biography should be written and, if so, by whom. Corey's daughter expressed her views in a letter: "To be honest, my first reaction is—why? If it is to be a book on Daddy's ideas, then I think his books speak for themselves and would not warrant an entire book as commentary. If it is to be a biography, then I think it should be the story of a European radical who embraces America and democracy after a long and tortured odyssey. . . .

"It seems to me if Daddy, as we knew him, is to come alive at all, his biographer should have a sense of humor. I feel very strongly about this. If the biography is to be a human document, it should show Daddy as he really was, with all his wonderful foibles. Daddy's life story may be a tragedy, but his daily living was not. . . . It should be simply a story of a very fascinating . . . human being."

In the last period before his death Corey was able to look back over his old writings, and he realized how many of his ideas had come full circle. "I have been reading over some of my old stuff [he wrote in 1947], and in my writings from 1913 to 1919, one theme that runs through it is anti-Statism, [the] danger of the trend toward state control of everything; I am trying to study how come, in spite of my anti-Statism, I fell for Lenin's dictatorship."²⁷

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid*

In his early writings in the *New Review*, he emphasized humanity and simplicity. He was critical of Oppenheim's "selfness," his being "overtly revolutionary," in contrast to Robert Frost's "humanness."²⁸ In his article on Futurism he does not deny the movement's artistic merits, but condemned their "machinizing the human," particularly Marinetti who "glorifies war" with yearning for a "Terza Roma which shall hold the world in awe."²⁹

When Daniel DeLeon died, Corey wrote an article about him, full of admiration for his former teacher, but critical of those of his actions which were based on the principle that the ends justify the means. "The emphasis on ideas and neglect of men was a serious flaw in DeLeon's make-up. . . . Men mattered little to him. . . . Social forces [mattered] . . ., not individual influences. . . ."³⁰

It took him two decades to free himself emotionally and intellectually from the "spell of Leninism." In 1951 he finally could write: "The use of war to spread communism originated with Lenin and has been accepted by communists everywhere since. . . . Use of force within the nation (to make the revolution) becomes use of war outside the nation (to spread the revolution) after the communist capture government power. . . . The idea of world revolution is always present in communism, and it includes the use of the Red Army to promote revolutions. . . . Russia's preparations for military aggression are covered up by 'peace' maneuvers. . . . Russian communism has become a power system whose dynamic expression is militarism and imperialism."³¹

The two outlines written shortly before his death show the intensity of a man who feels that time is running short. In notes for a chapter, "Labor is Not Enough," which was to be included in his autobiography, he wrote: "I want to provide a picture of unions as I knew them, based on my membership in the Typographical Union, my knowledge and experiences, my work for two years as educational director in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and as educational director for the Butcher Workmen, A.F. of L. from July 1951 to January 1953. I want to give the feel and the color of labor and some of its problems, including the need to civilize labor leaders (as America civilized the businessmen from 1890 to the 1930s). Labor cannot go it alone,

²⁸ *New Review*, July 15, 1915

²⁹ *Ibid.*, December, 1913

³⁰ *Ibid.*, July, 1914

³¹ Corey, "Showdown with Russia," *New Leader*, July 2, 1951.

or do the job of progressive social change; its leaders also can become corrupt with power; they are only *one* functional group which must cooperate with other progressive functional groups for human welfare in a free society. Labor is not the only progressive group in society. There is a danger of overemphasis on labor."

And in his outline for *Toward Understanding of America* he wrote: "American unionists rejected the negative criticisms of radicals and reformers and their absolute solutions; while men from Henry Adams to Debs inveighed against industrialism and democracy, the unions used their democratic rights to get their share of economic progress."³²

In his last writings Corey summed up his political faith. "A proposal for a socialist mixed economy retains all the democratic procedures and values; it retains free enterprise where it is still functional; it is a synthesis of liberal democracy and liberal socialism. This can bring the unity of conservatives and radicals which is so necessary for peaceful democratic change. For the true conservative must be a radical, for to conserve what is good in our democracy we need action to destroy the evil. And the true radical must be a conservative, for any new social order must conserve what is good in our democracy and build upon it in the future."³³

"The primary responsibility is borne by American intellectuals—to clarify American understanding of the problems of its world responsibility, to submerge 'American' anti-Americanism and give the world a truthful picture of the U.S.A., for upon understanding America and working with liberal democracy depends our own future and the future of the world."³⁴

And some final words on his personal philosophy: "I believe I do not have a personal need for worship, but I can understand and respect people who do. Religion, where it is not an institutional force for ecclesiastical reaction, has a place in the world in which there are, and should be, many different kinds of people who feel different needs.

"I believe that the simple human values of living are supreme . . . , the love of man and woman and of children, kindness, sincerity, the appreciation of the beauty of the world in which we live, respect for

³² Corey, "Toward an Understanding of America," a 7,500 word outline for a book.

³³ *Ibid.* See also, Corey, "A Rediscovery. . . ."

³⁴ Corey, "Toward an Understanding. . . ."

³⁵ *Ibid.*

the dignity and integrity of the people with whom we come into contact."

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